

# The New Face of Professional Resource Management

*“Employees of the  
National Park Service  
are our best asset.”*

—Fran Mainella  
NPS Director

Natural resource management in the national parks has a human face and it has changed. For more than a decade, NPS managers have recognized the increasing complexity of management issues affecting parks and the corresponding level of human effort and expertise necessary to preserve parks for the future. The response has been a gradual but consistent increase in the number and professional training of resource managers in the workforce. Since 1999 the Natural Resource Challenge has highlighted the need for professional positions to deal with a wide variety of technical issues related to water and air resources across the park system. With few parks able to hire their own specialists, new positions are being strategically located to serve multiple parks where the needs are greatest. Five of these new air and water resources staff are profiled in this chapter, their accomplishments related chiefly to technical assistance in their geographic focus areas, and the identification of research needs. The Challenge has also pointed to the need for highly trained individuals to design effective resource monitoring strategies, a critical function for the future of the parks. These doctorate- and master's-level natural resource experts, four of whom are profiled here, contribute valuable energy, intelligence, and experience to the fledgling monitoring networks. Altogether these staff are part of a new critical mass of expert natural resource managers in the National Park Service. They are extending the bounds of what we in the National Park Service can accomplish, what we must accomplish, to ensure the continuing enjoyment of park natural resources by the American people.